



ROMA

FOLK TALES





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Doja, The Gypsy Fairy by Lilla Varga, 10

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INTRODUCTION

We are a group of four Roma and non-Roma Hungarian students and one Asian-American teacher. **Our class was made possible by the cooperation between the Fulbright Commission and Wáli István Residential College.** This semester, we compared the struggle of ethnic minorities in the United States with the Roma's struggle to be accepted in Hungarian society. We found some common themes. For example, we read Amy Tan's personal essay "Fish Cheeks," which was about the traditional Chinese meal Tan's family served to her white American neighbor's (and crush's) family when she was an adolescent. Tan was ashamed of her culture. She thought she had to be similar to other people, and that if she wasn't, she wasn't worth others' love. At the end of the story, she realized that she had to be proud of her culture, and that she was special and valuable the way she was. Every culture is equal and a culture is just stronger and better if its members are proud. Unfortunately, people think that gypsies don't like to work and don't have morals. While it is true that some are thieves, the problem is that people think all of them are like that because of their skin. However, we can be just as talented and honest as anybody else. Some think we are too aggressive, but we are simply passionate.

To break these stereotypes, we have collected several gypsy folktales to show a different side of the story. We tried to ask family and friends to share any folktales they knew, but unfortunately, nowadays the folktales are forgotten. Instead, we turned to the internet and translated the stories from Hungarian so they can reach a wider audience. These tales tell a different story about gypsies. For example, "The Eggs" shows how clever and brave the gypsy servant is. He is loyal to the priest, his master, and tries to help him. He would even have killed the judge in order to save his master. In "The Gypsy Woman and the Devil," we can see how important family is to gypsies. In the end, Vunida sacrificed herself so that her children could survive. All of these stories show how smart and optimistic the Roma people are.

These folk tales are an important part of our culture. This project is important because people know very little about gypsies, only the stereotypes. These tales are exciting and amusing and help people to see us in a different aspect. People can see that we are good not just in singing and playing on musical instruments, but we are good in storytelling too. We mustn't let these tales vanish.

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The Story of the Sun and the Moon

Translated by Dalma Szpizár

There was a time when the moon and the sun weren't in the sky. They were chained in the other end of the world, by dragons and giants, and they didn't let go of neither the sun nor the moon.

Two men lived there who were really strong. They were considered the bravest and strongest men of the world and they weren't scared of anything. They were the only ones who knew where the sun and the moon were chained, and they departed to set them free. They were wandering for six months in the land of the dragons and the giants. When they reached the sun and the moon, they fought the horrific dragons and the terrible giants, and they won the battle. Then one of the men grunted, "I'm going to carry the sun!"

The other man said, "Then I'm going to take the moon!"

The two men set the sun and the moon free and started to go home to the other part of the world, through the land of the dragons and the giants. While they were wandering, the sun was so hot that it burned the man who was carrying it as dark as a dungeon. Gypsy people have brown skin because they are the sons of that man. All of the other man's descendants are white because he brought the moon. White people are all descended from him. It took 3 months to get home carrying the two orbs. After that, the gypsy and the white man kept the sun and the moon in their houses so they could have the light to themselves. The two men didn't want to set the moon and the sun free. Then the sky started to cry and this was the first rain in the world.

The white man said to the moon, "I'm going to let you go up, but swear that you will renew and appear in the sky on every first Friday of the month." The moon swore that it would do like he asked. That's why the moon is always new at the beginning of the month and at the end of the month, it goes down from the sky.

The sun swore too like the moon. Its vow was that it would shine every day, and that it would get up every day, even in winter too, so that the winter cold would not rule over the world.

After that, the two men released the sun and the moon. And the sun, as it swore, starts to get around to all of the countries every morning, but at night it arrives to stay in the West, from where the two men had saved them. And the moon does so too. Why? Because the sun and the moon are from the West sky, and they crave it all day. Their home is there. They were born there, and so they rest there. That's why the sun and the moon go down everytime in the West.



Three Origin Tales

Translated by Dóra György

Where Do Gypsies Come From?

Once upon a time, God knocked on the door of a poor woman. This woman had as many children as ants in a hive. The woman was ashamed of this, so she put some of them into the oven. Then she let God in, and he blessed her children. These white kids became rich and lucky people. The other children's skin got brown from the oven, and they became the gypsies. They have to suffer all their lives with no home, no money and no fortune.

The Birth of a Flower

When God created the land, the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the wind and the waters, he just walked alone and took pleasure in his world. One night he smelled a sweet, wonderful fragrance that he never smelled before. This was a sad flower on the meadow. God took pity on this beautiful lonely flower, so he created another one next to it. These two flowers were curious to know what was behind the mountains and waters, so they asked God to give them arms and legs to see what other things he created in the world. And God gave them arms and legs, so they could see every beautiful creation and they were happy. So gypsies spring from these two amazing flowers and they still keep wandering in the world everlastingly.

How did God Create Humans?

When God created the world, he was lonely because there were no people in it. So he kneaded some dough, formed people from it and started to bake them. He put the first man into the oven but he was so curious to see the consequence that he pulled it out too early and the man remained white like snow. Then he put the second dough into the oven, but now he was cleverer and more patient, so he pulled it out in time. This man was perfectly brown, and God really liked it. This was the gypsy. The God put the leftovers into the oven and started to party with the gypsies. They were dancing and singing all night long. God was so happy he forgot the last piece of dough in the oven and it became as black as the night. So finally God sent the white and the black men away and continued to celebrate with the gypsies.



Doja the Gypsy Fairy

Translated by Dalma Szpizár

A long time ago, there lived a Gypsy fairy whose name was Doja. She lived in the clouds in a palace. One day she decided to leave her home to be with her people, so she came down on a rainbow. While she was coming down, the gypsies were watering their horses. When they saw her, they thought she was a goddess. She had come to help them have their own country where they could live peacefully, create laws and work. She wanted to teach them that they have to share everything they have.

The Gypsies thought that it was a good idea, so they set out on a journey with the fairy. It was a long trip and they traveled in Doja's hair. Doja's hair was shiny and long and they grabbed onto her hair while she flew.

They flew like birds and when they finally reached their land, Doja said to them, „Look around! This is your land. That salty water is the sea, and there are thousands and thousands of gurgling rivers and glittering streams. The wind is murmuring as it blows through the forest. The animals are meek, and the trees have appetizing fruits, and the gardens are full of exotic and colorful flowers, like a paradise.”

They lived there with no problems, but one day a terrible thing happened. The earth opened and from the gaps, green creatures climbed out. The gypsies were scared to death. They were monsters from the earth and they had come up because somebody had stolen something from them.

One of the women said to Doja, „Yesterday evening, my son dug up a monster like them. It is in our house.”

Doja ran into the house and picked up the monster and set it free in front of the other creatures. It jumped into its mother's arms and they disappeared, as if they had never ever been there.

The gaps in the earths healed, but the gypsies weren't as happy as they had been before. They were bored and they missed their wandering and they were afraid. They wanted to leave their land. Doja promised them that she would take them back. The Gypsies wanted to take everything with them but Doja's hair was not strong enough to carry everything so one by one, they fell from Doja's hair. Eventually, the fairy noticed that she was flying alone. From that moment on, the Gypsies have been wandering to find each other in the world.



The Clever Mother

Translated by Dóra György

Once upon a time, on a white winter day, a gypsy woman went to town to sell her brooms. She had two little children and she could not leave them alone at the dirty yard, so she had to take them along with her.

After she sold all her brooms, she started to walk home with her sons.

On the snowy field she noticed a wolf running toward them.

She said to the boys, "Start to shout at the top of your voice, 'Wolf flesh! Wolf flesh!'"

When the wolf heard it, he stopped and asked the mother: "What are your children shouting?"

And the mother answered, "They are shouting 'wolf flesh' because that is their favorite food. Do not you see how tightly I have to hold them so they do not lacerate and devour you?"

Meanwhile the children were still shouting, "Wolf flesh! Wolf flesh!"

The wolf became as scared as a bunny in a foxhole, so he turned back fast and ran away. He met the fox who was really tired and the fox asked him, "Where are you running to so fast my friend?" And the wolf told to the fox the whole story with the gypsy woman and her wolf-eater sons.

The fox was laughing at him and said, "Such a fool you are, buddy. Even little children can make you run. I am too tired so I am not able to go back with you...Wait.. You know what? Here is this rope. Fix me on your back with this and run back fast for the mother and her two sons. If we catch them, we are going to eat them together."

So the wolf listened to the fox and fixed him on his back. They ran back to eat the family. When the mother noticed them, she said, "Why did you lie to me fox?! You promised three wolves to me, and you bring me only one? This one skeleton will not be enough for my hungry sonnies."

When the wolf heard it, he ran away like the wind. The fox fell off from the wolf's back, and he broke himself while the wolf crashed into a cliff wall and broke his neck.



The Eggs by Angelina Mohácsi, 13

The Eggs

Translated by Dóra György

Once upon a time, there were a cleric and his gypsy servant. The cleric never ate at home. He went to another man every single day for his meal. He ate an egg after every meal. But then, after a month, he had to pay for the food. The cleric visited the keeper to talk about the sum.

The keeper started to count. He added up how many eggs the cleric had eaten, and how many chickens would have hatched from those eggs and how many eggs would have been laid from those chicken and so on, until he stated an enormous sum of money.

All the money of the cleric would not have been enough to pay that huge total. So the keeper went to the judge and started to complain about the cleric. He explained his idea about the eggs and chickens.

Then the cleric got a citation from the judge. He was so sad because he didn't know what would happen to him.

The gypsy noticed that something was wrong with his master, so he asked him, "I see you are in big trouble. What's wrong?"

"Leave me alone! Why should I tell you?"

"Tell me! Maybe I can help you."

Finally the cleric told the whole story to the servant and the gypsy said that he wanted to go with him, so they put on their best clothes and went to the courthouse, but before leaving the gypsy put a half brick into his pocket.

When they arrived, the judge started to count the cleric's crimes, but the gypsy seemed calm and proud. Everybody thought that the brick in his pocket was money.

But then the gypsy said, "When are we going to leave my priest? You know what a big job is waiting for me at home."

And the judge asked, "What kind of job is waiting for you gypsy?"

"When we arrive I have to cook a sack of wheat. Then I must sow it."

"But why? It won't grow if you cook it first."

"Ooohh... It won't grow? And what about eggs? Will they produce chickens and then eggs if you cook them?"

The judge was ashamed, and said, "You're right."

"Well, my dear judge. If you had not let us home, I would have killed you with this half brick."

This is the story of how the clerk won the suit with the help of a clever gypsy servant.



The Magic Purse

Translated by Orsolya Türk

There was a poor man who had many children. One time, he went to look for God because he was angry because of his poverty and he wanted to hit God. On the way, he met an old man so the gypsy told his story. The old man gave him a magic purse. It was made of grey and stubbly wool and it looked like a simple bag.

The old man said: „Don't go to God, rather go home and say to this purse: 'Let's go my dear purse, let me have your contents!'"

The poor man tried this and a miracle happened. There appeared an endless supply of food and drink. He took the bag home and repeated the spell. The whole family, all children gorged. There were all kinds of delicacies: roasted meats, soft breads, lots of fruit and vegetables, wine and the like. The family was very happy.

One day the man sent his wife to the castle to invite the king for a feast, because the gypsy man was a relative to the king. However, the guards didn't admit the wife. The king sent her away because he didn't recognize her. So, the gypsy man went to the castle to invite the king and succeeded. At home, the gypsy conjured the feast again using the magic purse. The king wanted the purse himself and promised to give clothes to the children and to give the gypsy ten wagon-loads of ham, a cow, salt, and flour each day in exchange for the bag. The man accepted the offer but the king didn't keep his promise.

So the gypsy man sought God again to complain. God pitied him and gave him another bag. When the gypsy tried it and said „Let's go my dear purse, let me have your contents! „, „lot of sticks came from the bag and whipped him. When he shouted „Back!“ the sticks went back into the bag. The man wanted to punish the king so he went to the castle. There was a party going on and the gypsy man secretly exchanged the bags. When the king said: „Let's go my dear purse, let me have your contents! „, the sticks whipped the king and the guests. This was the revenge of the gypsy man.



The Gipsy Woman and the Devil by Máté Varga, 7

The Gypsy Woman and the Devil

Translated by Orsolya Türk

There was a beautiful widow gypsy woman, Vunida, who had 13 children. Her brown hair was soft and sparkling like silk. Every man admired her doe-eyes and balmy skin. But they were very poor so they slept all day to avoid feeling hungry. One day Vunida was going to beg in the shiny palace when she met the devil in the hazy forest. He fell in love with her straight away when he saw her. He wanted Vunida to marry him but she was afraid of him and ran away. Then the devil conjured a palace and turned himself into a good-looking prince. Vunida caught sight of the building and the handsome man so she rushed there desperately.

She cried, *„Please let me in! I met just now with the devil and I was afraid of him. I beg for bread for my 13 children. My 13 children are hungry and I can't give them anything to eat.“*

The devil, disguised as the prince, granted her request, and the woman was very grateful.

„You are so good to me! What can I give for you return? Maybe I can embroider a gold robe!“ she said. But the devil didn't want a robe, he wanted Vunida's beautiful hair and her ambrosial kisses. He didn't want to release the woman so he conjured a sky-high wall around the palace and admired Vunida's beauty all day and night. One night, when he was sleeping, Vunida went quietly out of the castle and dug a hole in the wall with her nails and escaped. She was running toward home when the devil perceived what had happened. He hunted high and low in the palace for Vunida, then he found the hole on the wall. His face turned ruddy because of anger and he started to run after her.

„Stop woman! Come back straight away!“ he screamed, and Vunida ran faster. The devil begged her with a gentle and soft voice, then he threatened her angrily but in vain. At least, he called down a curse on her. When Vunida got home, because of the curse, she turned into a sour-cherry-tree in front of the house. The children didn't know the tree was their mother so they ate her fruit every day and became strong and healthy. When they grew up, they started to look for their mother. Since then, the gypsies have been wandering the world looking for Vunida, and since then, her fruit has been called the gypsy-sour-cherry.



Jóska, the Rouge by Henrietta Juhász, 11

Jóska, the Rogue?

Translated by Jácint Lázók

Once upon a time, there was a poor gypsy man. People just called him Gypsy Jóska. He lived in a tent with his wife at the end of a small village. They didn't have a child so only the two of them lived there. Once Jóska took his hat and he went to town to take care about his business. When he headed back, heavy rain began and his hat became really heavy from the water. After the sun's warmth began to heat up the air, he took his hat off and put it on a bush to dry. As he watched his hat hanging from the bush, he was wondering if he could take it away without making a single leaf move.

"If I can take my hat away without making a single leaf move, I'd be a great rogue."

He tried, and he took it off. The bush was shaking a bit, but he imagined it wasn't.

"Good, the bush didn't shake. I'm going to be a good rogue."

He went home smiling and he said, "Hear me what I say, woman!"

"What are you going to tell me, Jóska?" asked the woman with wide open eyes.

"I'm telling you, I'm a great rogue!"

"You.... you as a rogue?" The woman giggled. "What kind of rogue could you be? You've never hurt anyone and have never stolen a needle!"

"Yes, you are right, I've never hurt anyone and I've never stolen anything either but still, I'm a great rogue! Go to the king's castle right now and tell him what a great rogue I am."

"Oh please dear, what are you talking about?" The woman was terrified.

"I'm serious, so go now to the king and tell him what I just said to you!"

She saw she couldn't make him change his mind. So she went to the king's castle.

The woman stopped in front of the king's throne and greeted the great emperor with respect in her voice.

"Greetings, my lord!"

"What's your business?" grunted the king.

"I'm here to tell you that my husband is one of the greatest rogues. He told me to come here and tell you about his rogueness."

The king was shaking his head and then commanded the woman, "Listen to me, woman! If your husband is such a great rogue, go home and tell him to steal my mighty steed by midnight, or else his head won't be attached to his body anymore!"

These words made the woman fall in agony and sorrow. She was thinking, "Oh my, Jóska, you are done for."

"Have you been at the king's?" asked her husband, immediately as she entered the house.

"Yes, I have."

"And what did you tell the king?" asked the husband impatiently.

"I told him that my husband Jóska is one of the greatest rogues."

"And what did he say to that?" asked the man with curiosity.

"He said he's going to decapitate you if you can't steal his mighty steed by midnight."

Jóska became really angry and began to fight his wife.

"Oh my...! Don't you dare to report your own husband to the king!" His head was as red as blood.

"Behave! I swear if you're not cutting this off, I'm going to throw this at you," said the wife and she lifted the casserole dish in her right hand.

They argued until there was peace again between them. But he had no choice but to steal the horse, because he liked his head on his neck.

He went and bought some tobacco and a flask of real strong pálinka. He added some sleeping powder to the beverage. So he prepared pretty well, because he knew twelve soldiers guarded the king's favorite horse all day and all night. Prepared to do his deed, he went to the king's barn.

As he arrived he started to shout, "Hungarian tobacco, best tobacco in the village!"

The soldiers looked out of the window to see who was being so loud. They saw it was the good old Gypsy Jóska.

The guards called him in the barn, "Come in Jóska, show us that tobacco of yours."

Jóska entered and showed his tobacco to the soldiers. Every one of them sniffed it with pleasure in his face. So they liked it and every one of them took one portion from the tobacco. They immediately smoked it, and they continuously complimented the tobacco.

One of the soldiers sighed, "I'd give my soul for a sip of pálinka."

Jóska had waited for just this moment. "It's your lucky day, because I have some with me."

These words made them say at exactly at the same time, "Give me some!"

"It isn't too much but I guess it's just enough to quench your thirst."

He divided all of the nectar between the guards, happily. As the thirsty guards drank the pálinka they fell to the ground sleeping. Jóska went to the horse. He hopped on the horse and galloped with the mighty steed like he was the king himself.

As he arrived he exclaimed, "See, woman?! I stole this horse from the king, even if twelve guards guarded this steed."

"There's going to be so much trouble from this..." cried the woman.

But her husband didn't pay attention because of his joy that his head was still attached to his body. As the king looked out from the window to see the weather, he saw his horse at the very end of the village in front of the Gypsy Jóska's tent. So he sent a soldier for Jóska's wife. So she went to the king's castle once again.

"I'm here, your majesty."

"You were right when you said your husband is a great rogue. He stole my steed from the guards, so he can have it, because he deserves it. But I have another quest for him. If he still likes his head on his neck, than steal the priest from his bed bring him to my castle by midnight."

The woman, in tears, told the king's word to her husband. Jóska scratched his head. But he had to obey the king's order. He went to the river and caught a fish. He went home to get a candle and a big bag. As night fell, he went to the priest's house's window and lit the candle and put it in to the fish's mouth and he held the bag with his other hand.

"Whoever wants to enter Heaven has to jump into this bag!" he shouted at the top of his lungs.

The priest woke up to his shouting and listened, but he said nothing.

Jóska shouted even louder, but the priest still remained in silence.

As he shouted for the third time the priest said, "I want to!"

So he jumped out of his window straight in to the bag. Jóska tried to knot the bag but the priest was a bit taller than the bag, so his head didn't fit.

Jóska thought, "Well... I've got the priest."

And he grabbed his leg through the bag and began to run to the king's castle. As he was running the priest's head hit some rocks sometimes.

"Oh my head!!" squawked the priest. "How far is Heaven?"

"Just few more knocks, sir."

He went straight to the king's bedroom and greeted the king.

"I've completed your order, your majesty. Here is the priest from his bed."

As the priest realized he wasn't in Heaven, but in the king's castle, he ran away from the village at that moment.

"Wow, I didn't think that you could do this one. Now I know what a great rogue you are."

Jóska stood there spinning his hat.

"You stole my steed, so you can have it. Be happy with it. And you delivered me the priest, so you can fill your bag with gold."

Jóska was sorry he didn't get a bigger bag, but when he filled it with gold, he couldn't lift the heavy bag, so he took only half a bag of gold home. He treasured the money so he didn't waste any of it. He bought land, a good cozy house, some nice clothes and a chariot for the horse. They lived happily, until they died.



Star Money by Amanda Varga, 9

Star Money

Translated by Jácint Lázók

There was a little girl, who was all alone in this big world. Her loving mother and her father were dead. This tiny little girl was so poor, she didn't even have a place where she could take a rest. She didn't even have a tiny bed, not even a straw-bed. She had nothing but her clothes that she wore all the time. She didn't have food. Out of pity, a stranger gave her a tiny piece of bread that she saved for later. But this girl was silent, humble and all good.

Once upon a time this little girl took herself and went to try her luck. As she roamed the roads she saw an old slim man. This man grunted to her, "Hey girl, give me something to eat." This little girl, without even thinking twice, gave away her last piece of bread. She smiled and her voice tinkled, "God bless you." As she walked away, the old man started to feast on the bread.

As she went further away from the village, she took a glance behind her but she had lost sight of the temple tower of the village. There was a little boy, who was even smaller than the girl herself. He only had a shirt on him and nothing else. The icy wind's cold felt like thousands of needles as the wind was howling in the night. The boy cried, "Give me something to screen my head from this cold. It is too cold for me." The girl felt pretty sorry about this little boy, so she gave him her warm hat.

She hadn't walked for too long when she met another little fellow, who was shaking as the evil wind was biting his skin. He only had a thin little shirt on him. He was crying as he asked the girl for help, "I'm going to freeze in this cold. Please give me your skirt." And the unselfish girl gave her skirt to the little one.

As she walked away, she met another boy. The boy said shaking from the freezing cold, "Can you give me a shirt? I'm going to freeze." She gave her shirt to the boy and walked further. She was walking all nude in the night in the middle of nowhere. Her shoes chafed against the rough surface of the frozen road. As she stopped for a moment, the stars fell down at her feet as golden coins.

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